i) It will minimize misclassification of students on the basis of unreliable marks.

ii) It eliminates unhealthy competition among high achievers.

iii) It reduces societal pressure and provides the learner with more flexibility.

iv) It leads to a focus on a better learning environment.

v) It prevents lowering of self-esteem of the child.

Unmanned railway level crossings

*35. DR. JANARDHAN WAGHMARE:
SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a speeding Gonda-Ayodhya passenger train rammed into a truck at an unmanned level crossing on 1st November, 2009 resulting in deaths of several persons;

(b) if so, whether a large number of unmanned railway level crossings still exist which are posing danger to the crossing vehicles, etc.;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether Government had earlier given assurance that all unmanned railway level crossings would be either manned or electronic devices would be placed for controlling vehicles, etc.; and

(e) if so, the reasons for not following the earlier orders in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir. On 01.11.2009 at 13.05 hrs., one truck loaded with sand dashed against engine of train No. 441 Up Gorakhpur-Ayodhya Passenger at Unmanned Level Crossing No.l5/C in block section Mankapur - Katra on Lucknow Division of North Eastern Railway. Although all warning signs at the level crossing were available and the Loco Pilot had continuously blown whistle before approaching the above unmanned level crossing, the accident occurred due to the negligence and rash driving by the truck driver. This unfortunate incident resulted into deaths of 18 persons, grievous injuries to 21 persons and simple injuries to 16 persons. Statutory inquiry is being conducted by Commissioner of Railway Safety, North Eastern Circle. Considering the gravity of the human suffering, the Ministry of Railways has announced an ex-gratia amount of Rs.5 lakhs to the next of the kin of each deceased, Rs.l lakh to each grievously injured and Rs. 10,000 to each simple injured.

(b) and (c) As on 01.04.2009, the number of unmanned level crossings on Indian Railways is 16976. Railways have laid down guidelines for manning of unmanned level crossings. All level crossings where Train Vehicle Units (TVUs) are more than 6000 and those level crossings having TVUs between 3000 and 6000 with restricted visibility of 800 metres or less qualify for manning. The unmanned level crossings qualifying the criteria for manning are being manned progressively on continuous basis.

In the year 2000, there were approximately 20,000 unmanned level crossings on Indian Railways, out of which over 3,000 have already been manned till date. During 2009-10, 304 additional unmanned level crossings had been earlier planned to be manned. The pace of manning is now to be stepped up so as to reach a level of manning of 1000 unmanned level crossings in a year as per a policy decision taken by the Railway Ministry.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

Effects of monsoon deficiency

*36. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether due to 28 per cent deficiency in monsoon and less sown area under paddy, oilseeds and sugarcane lower than last year, kharif foodgrains production is expected to fall sharply;

(b) if so, whether according to experts, the loss of about 6 million hectares in paddy sowing in the rainfed States and mortality of standing crops in 141 drought affected districts, would hit output severely;

(c) whether PM had also held discussions with CMs on this issue; and

(d) if so, whether Government has taken a policy decision as to how to address the drought?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) The deficiency in South-West Monsoon, 2009 has been 23%, with 300 districts being declared as affected by drought/scarcity/drought-like situation. As per the First Advanced Estimates of the Government, foodgrains production in Kharif 2009-10 is expected to be 96.63 million tonnes compared to 117.70 million tonnes in Kharif 2008-09, *i.e.*, a shortfall of about 21,1 million tonnes. The shortfall in paddy area sown is about 5.4 million hectare.

(c) Yes, Sir. In the Chief Ministers' Conference held on 17.8.2009, addressed by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, appropriate remedial measures to mitigate the impact of drought were discussed in detail.

(d) The Government has taken several important policy decisions to address the drought which, *inter alia*, are, constitution of an Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM) to review the condition and take appropriate decisions to counter the impact of drought; providing assistance to the States to save the standing Kharif crop through providing additional power, diesel subsidy, etc; increase the area under Rabi cultivation to compensate for likely loss in Kharif; increasing upper ceiling of distribution subsidy on certified seeds under Government of India programmes; providing assistance from Calamity Relief Fund (CRF)/National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF) to the affected States for agriculture input subsidy and other relief measures etc; and regular review with all concerned Central Ministries/Departments and State Governments.